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Vesco reported living in Cuba with Castro's authorization

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HAVANA—Circumstantial evidence indicates that fugitive American financier Robert Vesco is living in Cuba with Cuban President Fidel Castro's authorization, Western diplomats here say.

The communist island, suggested one diplomatic source, has become a "golden prison" for Vesco, wanted by U.S. authorities for more than a decade for his part in a \$224 million mutual fund swindle.

Evidence that the elusive Vesco is here, Western diplomatic sources say, is primarily based on reports from diplomats and Cu-

bans who claim to have seen him in at least four locations in the last four months.

Officials of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana reportedly have tried unsuccessfully to contact Vesco.

IN ONE OF the firmest sightings to date, the sources said, a Western European diplomat, reportedly told American colleagues in Havana that he saw a man he is convinced is Vesco aboard a Cuban civilian aircraft on a domestic flight.

A man closely resembling Vesco has also been seen since Jan. 1 at Barlovento, an exclusive foreigners-only residential yacht club near Havana; at Varadero, a popular resort east of the Cuban capital; and at Cayo Largo, a new international resort on a tiny island south of the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's south coast.



Vesco

It is believed that Vesco may now be residing at Cayo Largo, the diplomatic sources say.

"And he [Vesco] couldn't be here if he did not have the authorization of Fidel Castro," the source says. "A person like Vesco might be able to enter Cuba illegally, but he could not stay for too long without the knowledge or permission of Castro himself and his state security and intelligence services."

VESCO'S WHEREABOUTS have not been established since he was forced to leave Costa Rica, his last haven, in the late 1970s. He has subsequently been reported in various locations around the Caribbean basin, including Nicaragua and the island of Antigua.

The first indication that Vesco might be in Cuba came last November when a federal prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Atty. Jack Wolfe, said in a Brownsville, Tex., court that Vesco was living in Cuba. Wolfe accused Vesco of "masterminding" a scheme to circumvent the U.S. trade embargo of Cuba by routing American technological equipment to Havana through Canada and other nations that have commercial relations with the Castro regime.

Wolfe, who was arguing a case involving a man on trial for conspiracy to violate the trade embargo, said a close friend of Vesco's had met the fugitive financier in Havana in 1983.

A few days after Wolfe's disclosure, reporters on a trip to Cuba, spotted one of Vesco's top associates, Milton Meissner, in Barlovento.

Meissner is one of several men wanted with Vesco in the United States in connection with the swindle.

Meissner had last been seen in Costa Rica in 1978 shortly before Vesco was expelled.

Vesco was indicted by a grand jury in New York on Jan. 11, 1976, on charges of conspiring to misappropriate profits from the mutual fund.